JumpStart Online
Technology Opportunities Program Grant Proposal

Submitted by:
City of Tucson

Table of Contents

Twenty years ago, at 22, Robert entered prison a strong, intellectually alert, able-bodied construction worker. Years of standing on concrete floors left him permanently disabled. He was released from prison last summer physically disabled, with chronic bronchitis and limited intellectual ability, unable to re-enter the construction field. Robert had never worked on a computer and had no typing skills.

Left Behind. With unemployment at an all-time low, there is still a large segment of Tucson's population that cannot find or keep jobs that pay a living wage. Our low-income and unemployed adults have been left behind by the recent economic boom. They simply do not have the skills needed to successfully compete for living-wage jobs in our increasingly technology-based economy.

Over 20% of Tucson's adult workforce does not have a high school diploma, a basic requirement for successfully landing a living-wage job.[1] Almost 20% of our citizens are at or below the poverty level. Single women head nearly half of the families living in poverty, and almost all of these families have children under 18.[2] Tucson's income gap continues to be significant. In 1999, the bottom 44% earned less than 17% of the total income.[3]

Basic computer skills, e-mail and Internet awareness, vital in today's jobs, are beyond the reach of Tucson's unemployed. They are trying to compete for jobs without ever having the opportunity to obtain the needed skills. Among the clients of our partner adult job training organizations, less than 10% have ever used a computer.

Additionally, individuals wanting to succeed in today's labor market must have strong literacy skills. Tucson's adult job training service providers agree this is one of the major barriers to successful entry into the labor market.[4] Even company executives are reluctant to join in online conversations and activities if they are unsure of their reading and writing abilities.[5]

Scrambling for Employees. Tucson's employers are scrambling to find and keep qualified workers. With Tucson's unemployment rate at a 17-year low of 2.8%, companies report shortage of qualified applicants.[6] Teleservice companies[7] in Tucson need anywhere from 20 to 100 new employees *each month*. Yet, companies estimate

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[1] America Community Survey 1999 Profile, US Census Bureau.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid.
[4] City of Tucson-hosted meeting, March 2001.
[5] David Griffis, Griffis Consulting and MeetAnytime founder.
[6] City of Tucson, Pima County and United Way Human Services Report, Inventory and Evaluation, 1999-2000.
[7] Teleservice companies, unlike telemarketing companies, provide a variety of customer services nationally. Partner company services range from telephone relay services for the deaf to UPS package tracking.

they turn away up to 50% of their applicants because these individuals are not qualified[8].

In summary, the needs to be addressed by this proposal are:

1. Almost 20% of Tucson's citizens live at or below the poverty level.
2. Underemployed and unemployed in Tucson do not have the basic computer and online skills needed to compete successfully in today's job market.
3. Tucson employers need trained workers.
4. Strong literacy skills are key to successful long-term participation in the labor market and need to be addressed in the context of a connected labor market.
5. Low-income families often face additional barriers to accessing training, such as childcare and transportation needs.

Solution – JumpStart Online

This project will apply web and network technology to transform workforce development programs for the underemployed and unemployed. It will bring the power of the Internet to workforce development by web-enabling the core processes of **Train to Gain**. In doing so, this project will create a model that can be replicated in workforce development programs throughout the nation.

Through extensive and unique public-private partnerships, the Tucson community has created **Train to Gain** (see Appendix A). Train to Gain uses a three phased approach to training and career development, laying out a career path from basic subsistence jobs to high-skilled, high-wage information technology positions. Partners in Train to Gain include teleservice and information technology companies, nonprofit service agencies, local governments and training providers. Funding is provided through the Pima Workforce Investment Board (WIB).

This project seeks to create JumpStart Online, a web-enabled collaboration and training space for Train to Gain Phase I. Train to Gain Phase I provides low-income or unemployed adults intensive training in the skills needed to obtain work with partner teleservice companies and assists in placement.

JumpStart Online will use web and broadband networking technologies and commercially available products to create an online collaboration space for Train to Gain Phase I. Unlike earlier workforce development Internet efforts, this project goes beyond creating a portal to automate transactions and provide one-way information. It will create a true collaborative space for all stakeholders: participants, service providers, employers and supporting organizations.

JumpStart Online has three major components:
1. Education and training, including literacy education, class discussion spaces, and class exercises.
2. Participant services, including intake, assessment, counseling and progress tracking.

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8 Paul Hawkins , former chair of the Southern Arizona Teleservice Industry Cluster

3. Employment assistance, including virtual tours of the partner teleservice companies, résumé development guidance and résumé posting.

Participants will be provided home computers and broadband access for the duration of their training and six months after completion. They will be able to earn credit toward purchase of the computer by mentoring new participants. They will also be mentored and assisted by the participants in Phase II of the Train to Gain program.

JumpStart Online will complement the Pima County Virtual One Stop, slated to be implemented in late 2001. The Virtual One-Stop will provide a comprehensive workforce development service portal for employers, training providers, nonprofit job training and placement service organizations, job seekers, and students. JumpStart Online will link to the applicable services offered by the Virtual One-Stop.

Specifically, JumpStart Online will work as follows:

> In the case of Robert, he would first be assessed by the job training service agency. Together, the caseworker and Robert would assess his life goals and abilities, and if there is a fit, enroll him in Train to Gain JumpStart. Robert's literacy level would be assessed using the MindPlay online assessment tool. Because his reading level is low, Robert's first step would be to complete the *My Reading Coach* program to a tenth grade reading level. Limited computer and keyboard skills will be taught during this phase.

> Next, Robert will move on to basic computer, keyboard and Internet training provided by the Tucson/Pima Library. He will also be enrolled in Goodwill's teleservice training program and enter the JumpStart Online community. He will be trained use of the online environment and the capabilities it provides. Robert will be provided a home computer and broadband Internet access (this will be funded by the program for six months, after which Robert would be responsible for continuing the service). Through JumpStart Online, he will be able to continue with the reading and literacy work, complete class exercises and labs, contact tutors for class assistance, and communicate with caseworkers.

> When Robert is ready to look for work, Goodwill Industries will assist him in locating a position. Through the online community, he will be able to play a significant role in finding a job. Robert could take virtual tours of potential employers, contact current and previous teleservice employees, and create and post his résumé. After his placement, Robert will continue to be a part of the online community, receiving support and assistance for six months after his placement.

As illustrated above, JumpStart Online will help alleviate many of the barriers low-income adults face when attempting to complete job placement programs. Through JumpStart Online, participants like Robert will have more effective and comprehensive training; Tucson's employers have access to a steady stream of well-trained, highly qualified employees; and nonprofit agencies' can improve their efficiency in assisting clients.

Outcomes

Specifically, we anticipate JumpStart Online will achieve the following outcomes.

1. JumpStart Online will increase the likelihood that the community's low-income adults will be able to complete training, then enter and remain in the workforce earning a living wage.
2. Partner companies will be provided better-qualified employees.
3. The partner job training and service agencies will be better able to serve the participants using the JumpStart Online collaboration space.

Innovation

There are two major areas of innovation for this proposal. First, JumpStart Online will create an online collaboration space for workforce development programs.

In the evolution of networking technologies and the Internet, organizations have become very good at connecting people in a variety of places; organizing and displaying information; and conducting web-based transactions. The next breakthrough for a connected world is the ability to purposely create a replicable online collaboration community. Past TOP grants related to workforce development have concentrated on web-based training and transaction portals for service agencies. This program seeks to build a replicable model for creating true workforce development collaboration spaces.

The second major area of innovation for this program is the unique and extensive partnerships. The JumpStart Online program brings together over 20 diverse community partners and creates a solution that meets each of their needs. Tucson's low-income adults who participate in this program will be better prepared to succeed in the labor market and will be on a career track full of opportunities. The nonprofit service organizations will be able to work with their clients more effectively, thus leveraging their limited resources. Partner companies will have a steady stream of highly qualified potential employees.

Diffusion Potential

Every aspect of this program is designed to be replicable. It builds on inexpensive, proven network and web technologies and software, and uses a variety of broadband communications.

JumpStart Online will be designed to work with any workforce development program. The circles of interest (see Appendix B) apply to virtually all programs.

The program also builds on previous TOP grants and creates a model for providing computers in the homes of under-served populations. To ensure computers are available to participants after the grant period, this program will create a realistic, self-sustaining model of acquiring and refurbishing computers donated by partner companies.

The program's investigation of delivering specific web-based services directly to participants' homes will provide valuable lessons for all social service organizations

looking for opportunities to leverage limited resources by applying web and network technology.

City/County Diffusion

In year three, JumpStart Online will be expanded to include Train to Gain Phase II and Phase III. Progress will be documented through quarterly reports and a program web site. The web site will be linked to sites covering related activity, including distance learning, public housing projects, library information, and work force development. The Train to Gain public relations subcommittee will use public service announcements and press releases to notify local press, as well as media outlets covering public housing and information technology issues.

National Diffusion

The City of Tucson and the Train to Gain public relations subcommittee will distribute information about JumpStart Online to national forums, civic government trade magazines, workforce development publications and economic development publications.

Feasibility

Technical Approach

JumpStart Online will take advantage of the power of the Internet to web-enable the core processes of Train to Gain Phase I and provide home access to the participants.

The technical solution will employ industry standards, ensuring interoperability and allowing for growth. Project feasibility rests on the ability to develop a web-based software infrastructure upon which the Train to Gain processes will reside. The infrastructure must accommodate the rapid changes of Internet technologies and the evolving project demands of Train to Gain. The technology for creating this software infrastructure already exists.

Java will be the foundation for all web-enabling activities. A Java-based Internet infrastructure will be able to adapt to changes in the Internet. This will allow the project team to quickly develop solutions in a variety of web-authoring and scripting languages and plug these into the Java platform.

From this foundation, the project will take advantage of existing softwa re solutions, including off-the-shelf applications, services available through application service providers, and, where required, custom applications quickly created in Java-compatible markup languages (i.e. Cold Fusion, PHP, Microsoft Active Server Pages). The project team will conduct a competitive feasibility analysis of any off-the-shelf software, to include factors such as security, cost per user, ease of use, speed, return on investment, scalability and compatibility. An inventory of possible software solutions will be maintained.

We develop and implement the system in phases. This will help ensure project success by providing a realistic timeframe to finalize requirements, identify the optimal solution for each JumpStart Online component, create a prototype, and train end users.

For the duration of this grant, new computers will be provided to the participants. This will provide a controlled environment while we refine end user support and training requirements, and analyze the collaboration space. We anticipate using donated refurbished computers after the grant period.

Proven network technologies, including fiber optics, cable and wireless connections, will be used to link participants. They will be connected to the Internet using either Cox Communications cable or Sprint Broadband wireless. The training facilities, Santa Rosa Learning Center and Southern Arizona Institute of Technology (SAIT), will be connected through the City of Tucson's fiber optics network and broadband wireless. To ensure ongoing support, JumpStart Online will be hosted by a commercial Internet service provider (ISP).

The program is designed to allow growth in several areas. First, the online space can be expanded to include the two additional phases of Train to Gain. Second, computers can be added to each training facility and the number of simultaneous classes offered can be increased. Finally, the home computer component can be expanded. There are multiple potential avenues for doing this, including allowing students to earn computers through the local schools, and enabling individuals and families to earn computers through volunteer work.

Applicant Qualifications.
The fiber network will be managed by the City of Tucson. Commercial broadband home access will be managed by Cox Communications and the Sprint Broadband Wireless Group. JumpStart Online will be developed by MeetAnytime. MeetAnytime specializes in creating online collaboration spaces for nonprofit organizations. The *My Reading Coach* integration will accomplished by MindPlay staff. *My Reading Coach* is a product of MindPlay.

Budget and Implementation Schedule.
As a result of the key partnerships with the City of Tucson, Sprint and Cox Communications, much of the wide area connectivity and network infrastructure are in place. The TOP funding will help traverse the "last 100 feet", providing computers and printers to the learning center and 180 homes.

The TOP funding will be also be used to create JumpStart Online and provide MindPlay's online reading package to all participants. The project schedule is included in Appendix D.

Sustainability.
The Train to Gain program is designed to be seeded with public funds and transition to a self-funding model. Participants in each phase of the career program will assist those in the earlier phases. New home computers will be purchased for participants for the duration of the grant period to allow for consistent evaluation. For follow-on participants, partner companies will donate used computers as they upgrade their desktop systems. Participants in later phases of Train to Gain will refurbish these computers. Participants in the later phases will also provide end-user support.

Partnerships. This project brings together partners from across the entire community. The City of Tucson is collaborating with agencies serving the unemployed, government workforce development agencies, high tech professional organizations, private companies, web solution providers, broadband communications providers, the public library and the University of Arizona to create this unique solution. This partnership is possible because JumpStart Online meets the needs of this broad range of stakeholders. The specific roles of the partners are outlined in Appendix C.

Community Involvement. Partner job training service organizations serve 3800 clients per year. They have clearly articulated the needs of their diverse clients, and the JumpStart Online program has been structured to meet these needs. Specifically, training will be targeted and designed to allow participant to enter the workforce as rapidly as possible. Computer training will be presented at the level required and appropriate for the progress of the participant. Literacy will be addressed first, before the participant is expected to function in the online collaboration community. Finally, participants will remain in the online community for six months after job placement to help ensure long-term success.

Reducing Disparities
When Phoenix, Arizona, began a high-tech, high-wage program, the poverty gap was expected to narrow. Instead, the gap *increased.* "Phoenix left the poorest in the community behind. The program did not extend to those on the edge of subsistence", according to Suzanne Lawder, CEO of Goodwill Industries.

If a program is to have a meaningful impact on a community, it must offer the unemployed and underemployed a path to economic independence. JumpStart Online does just that. By extending to those in our community most in need, this program can help creating patterns of success where once there was only despair.

JumpStart Online will bring computers and online knowledge to those in our community most in need. Less than 8% of the target population has ever owned a computer. Robert typifies this group. He has never worked on a computer, has no keyboard skills, and has never accessed the Internet.

In today's workforce, it is not enough to simply help low income adults find jobs; training is critical. And, training that incorporates Internet technologies can be used to build a generation of change. The Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) found that a focused program did not simply provide individuals jobs, but had striking, long-term positive effects on adults, children and families. Among participants, the study showed: decreased domestic abuse by 18%; increased the likelihood of a family owning a home by 100%; increased earnings by 23%; and decreased the chances of divorce by 38%.[9]

JumpStart Online will build on this experience, leveraging community partnerships and use the Internet to expand resources. And, because participants will be trained in the

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[9] "Reforming Welfare and Rewarding Work: A Summary of the Final Report on the Minnesota Family Investment Program," Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation and State of Minnesota Department of Human Services; 2000.

specific skills required to work in a connected world, the impacts from this program can be even more dramatic than those sited above.

End User Support. Basic computer skills courses will be provided by the Tucson/Pima Library at the Santa Rosa Learning Center. The courses will be taught at a variety of grade levels. JumpStart Online user training will be provided to staff at all partner organizations and to program participants. Training for participants will be staged to correlate with their skill level and progress in the overall training program. On-call technical support will be provided during evening hours by Train to Gain Phase II students. As part of their training, these students will provide help desk support to Phase I participants. This will be conducted in a controlled classroom environment, with backup assistance available.

Privacy and Security. The City has existing network firewalls and security procedures to protect the network. End users will be trained on responsibilities and consequences of improper use. Internet filtering software will be included with all home computer systems where minors reside in the house. JumpStart Online will require sign-on and will assign the appropriate security level to each user, depending on their role in the program. The system will be protected using firewalls.

Evaluation and Documentation

External evaluation of JumpStart Online will be conducted by the University of Arizona's Economic and Business Research Program. The evaluation will assess the impact of this program in improving the ability of Tucson's low-income adults to compete for and keep jobs that pay a living wage. Specifically, the evaluation will seek to answer the questions:
1. Does JumpStart Online improve the ability of low-income adults to enter and remain in the workforce earning a livable wage?
2. Does JumpStart Online provide partner companies better-qualified employees?
3. Are service agencies better able to serve their constituents using JumpStart Online?

These questions will be evaluated using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data. A control group will be established and results compared to those from JumpStart Online. Pre- and post-training skills tests, retest rates (how often participants need to repeat portions of the training), pre- and post-training earning statistics, participant job turn-over rates, promotion rates, and questionnaires will be used to assess the participants' ability to enter and remain in the workforce, earning a living wage. Employer satisfaction surveys, participant promotion rates and participant job performance ratings (reported anonymously) will be used to assess the qualifications of employees who are trained through JumpStart Online. Finally, in combination with the above, questionnaires will be used to assess service agencies' ability to serve their constituents using JumpStart Online.

The high-level evaluation plan is attached at Appendix E.